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Item 8 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE

Report on the International Consultation on the Situation of the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic and Siberian Regions

(Khabarovsk, Siberia 6-10 September 1993)

Note by the secretariat

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CONTENTS

		Paragraphs
Introduction		1 - 3
I.	ORGANIZATION OF THE CONSULTATION	4 - 15
	A. Participation	4
	B. Agenda	5
	C. Documentation	6
	D. Opening of the Consultation	7 - 13
	E. Officers of the Consultation	14 - 15
II.	GENERAL DEBATE	16 - 22
III.	LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES: EXISTING LAWS RELATING TO ACCESS, USE AND OWNERSHIP	23 - 30
IV.	DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT: PROBLEMS, INCLUDING HEALTH ISSUES, AND PERSPECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	31 - 34
V.	PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE CULTURE AND LANGUAGES OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE ARCTIC AND SIBERIA	35 - 37
VI.	ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION OF PROJECTS AFFECTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	38 - 42
VII.	INTERNATIONAL ACTION: STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE; PRIORITIES AND FOLLOW-UP	43 - 50
VIII.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	51 - 92

Introduction

1. Within the framework of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and at the invitation of the Government of the Russian Federation, the International Consultation on the Situation of the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic and Siberian Regions took place in Khabarovsk, Siberia, from 6 to 10 September 1993. The Plan of Action for the International Year adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 46/128, inter alia, called on the United Nations system to increase coordination, cooperation and technical assistance for the solution of problems faced by indigenous communities in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health. The Consultation aimed at the exchange of information regarding the situation of indigenous communities of the Arctic and Siberian regions and at exploring the possibilities for assistance by the United Nations system through projects of an economic, environmental, legal (including human rights), social, cultural or other nature. The theme of the consultation was "Indigenous people - a new partnership: defining priorities and long-term goals".

2. The Consultation was co-sponsored by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation and the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The Consultation was co-organized by the Russian Federation State Committee on Federal and Nationality Issues, the Russian Federation State Committee for the Social and Economic Development of the North and the Administration of the Khabarovsk Region.

3. The cost of the Consultation was covered by the host Government of the Russian Federation and voluntary contributions from Norway, Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Home Rule Government of Greenland.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE CONSULTATION

A. Participation

4. Invited to the Consultation were indigenous organizations from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America. Representatives of local and regional administrations of the Russian Federation, experts and representatives of United Nations departments and agencies were also invited.

B. Agenda

5. The agenda of the Consultation was the following:

1. Land and natural resources: existing laws relating to access, use and ownership.

2. Development and environment: problems, including health issues, and perspectives for sustainable development.

3. Protection and promotion of the culture and languages of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and Siberia.

4. Arrangements for participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects affecting indigenous peoples.

5. International action: standards and technical assistance.

6. Priorities and follow-up.

C. Documentation

6. Four main papers were prepared for the Consultation: Mr. Lars Anders Baer, President of the Saami Council, wrote on the situation of indigenous peoples in Finland, Norway and Sweden; Mr. Richard Caulfield, Professor at the University of Fairbanks, Alaska, wrote on Greenland; Ms. Dalee Sambo, Executive Director of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, wrote on Alaska; and Mr. Nikolai Vakhtin, Institute of Linguistic Research, Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, wrote on Russia. Papers had also been prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP and the World Bank.

D. Opening of the Consultation

7. The Consultation was opened on behalf of the host Government of the Russian Federation by Mr. Vladimir Seriakov, Deputy Chairman, State Committee on Federal and Nationality Affairs, and Deputy Chairman of the National Committee of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

8. Mr. Seriakov pointed out that in the context of the multinational Russia, indigenous peoples deserved special attention. Problems of land use were being reviewed and, in that regard, the experience of other Nordic countries was very valuable. Industrial development was inevitable, but it had to benefit not only those away from the areas being industrialized, but also those who lived in those areas, including the indigenous peoples. Appropriate mechanisms for development had to be established and freedom of information and nationwide interests had to be combined and national integrity had to be preserved. Under the umbrella of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, the Government was working within a human rights framework to provide legal support for indigenous peoples, to revive indigenous cultures and to protect the environment. A draft law on traditional natural management of resources was under preparation.

9. Mr. Seriakov also referred to a number of activities under way in the cultural domain. Such activities included publication of books on indigenous peoples, ethnographic studies, restoration of monuments, protection of films and establishment of museums. A programme of action had been initiated by presidential decree and relevant laws would be adopted soon stating the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples had to be protected so that they could live their traditional lives. Their spiritual survival called for the development of their languages and cultures. Action should not be limited to the duration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, but

should continue beyond the Year. Mr. Seriakov expressed the hope that the Consultation world prepare proposals and practical suggestions for the improvement of the lives of indigenous peoples.

10. On behalf of the Khabarovsk Administration, Mr. Uri Matveev, Deputy Chairman, welcomed the participants to the Consultation and briefly referred to the measures of his Administration regarding the indigenous people of the region.

11. The United Nations Representative in the Russian Federation, Mr. Juan Amunategui, made an opening statement on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Coordinator of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, Mr. Ibrahima Fall. He expressed his deep appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for hosting the Consultation as well as to the Governments of Sweden and Norway, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organisation and the Home Rule Government of Greenland for their financial contributions which made possible the organization of the meeting.

12. The United Nations Representative underlined that an era of hope and new partnership had been proclaimed by the United Nations through the International Year of the World's Indigenous People which had two basic aims: (a) to raise public awareness, nationally and internationally, about the situation and aspirations of indigenous peoples, and (b) to encourage the participation of indigenous peoples in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects which may affect them. The Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations for the International Year called for measures at the national and international level. It called on the international community to find concrete projects for indigenous communities, reflecting the wishes of indigenous people, that can have a direct benefit to those communities; to establish networks of indigenous organizations and communities for the sharing of information and experience in particular fields, such as health care, bilingual education, resources and environmental management; and to provide technical assistance to Governments wishing to make provisions in their legislation for the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous people in particular on questions of land, environmental protection and strengthening of cultural identity, as well as technical and financial assistance for the implementation of such legislation.

13. The United Nations system had started to respond to these challenges; information about the International Year was being divulged, a Voluntary Fund for the International Year had been established and formal and informal consultations with indigenous people were held. At such an international consultation in December 1992, within the framework of the inauguration of the Year at United Nations Headquarters, it was recommended that consultations at the regional level should be organized. The Arctic/Siberian Consultation was the first such follow-up meeting. The World Conference on Human Rights had recommended the launching of a Decade of the World's Indigenous People starting in January 1994. It had also recommended the provision of technical assistance to Governments which would be to the direct benefit of indigenous

peoples; had called for the completion of the draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and had recommended the creation of a permanent United Nations forum for indigenous peoples within the framework of the Decade of Indigenous Peoples.

E. Officers of the Consultation

14. Mr. Vladimir Seriakov, representative of the Government of the Russian Federation, and Mr. Lee Swepston, representative of the International Labour Organisation, served as Co-Chairmen of the Consultation. Mr. Ingmar Egede, Vice-President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), Greenland, served as Rapporteur.

15. The Rapporteur called on indigenous participants from the Russian Federation to assist him in the preparation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Consultation. The following persons assisted the Rapporteur: Mr. Peter Bekerov, Mr. Michail Todyshev and Mr. Sidor Filippov.

II. GENERAL DEBATE

16. The United Nations Representative in the Russian Federation delivered a message by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor. UNESCO projects on the Arctic and Siberian indigenous peoples had been launched under the World Decade for Cultural Development. The International Fund for the Promotion of Culture had financed the "Arts from the Arctic" project and the "Amerindia '92" project had placed special emphasis on the Inuit people. A very important work entitled Arctic Languages: an Awakening was published by UNESCO in 1990. Although UNESCO was unable to be represented at the Arctic/Siberian Consultation, it looked forward to the conclusions and recommendations and would examine with interest projects pertaining to the World Decade for Cultural Development, cultural heritage and basic education.

17. The representative of the Centre for Human Rights delivered a message by Bishop Sir Paul Reeves, Chairman of the NGO Committee for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People which was one of the co-sponsors for the Consultation. In his message of greeting Bishop Reeves called the Arctic/Siberian Consultation an historic meeting and pointed out that it is right that indigenous peoples share their hopes and seek the advice and assistance of international bodies. Indigenous peoples want to define how they should live their lives and protect their sense of being people of the land.

18. The representative of the Centre for Human Rights also conveyed a message from the World Bank. The World Bank expressed its profound regret at not being able to send a representative to the Consultation due to conflicts of schedule. However, it wished to assure participants of its interest in follow-up action based on the recommendations of participants.

19. Introductory presentations were made regarding the situation of the indigenous people of the Arctic countries. Mr. Richard Caulfield presented a paper on Greenland, Mr. Uri Simchenko on Russia, Mr. Lars Anders Baer on Finland, Norway and Sweden. Ms. Dalee Sambo's paper on Alaska was presented by the representative of the Centre for Human Rights. The papers focused

mainly on institutions regulating the relations of indigenous peoples to land, natural resources and development, as well as on environmental and health issues.

20. Participants took the floor for a general overview of the situation of indigenous peoples in Siberia and identified several problems. They pointed out the lack of adequate laws and the difficulty in implementing existing laws affecting indigenous peoples. In that regard, they stressed that documents adopted by the United Nations, especially human rights instruments, were extremely relevant for Russian indigenous peoples.

21. Major issues identified by speakers were land and natural resources and indigenous participation and self-government. Health, housing and education for indigenous peoples were also problematic areas. It was pointed out that several indigenous peoples were on the verge of extinction. Another problem was the fact that regional administrations did not always implement decrees of the central Government nor distribute funds received by the central Government to indigenous communities. Some local administrations, however, were following practices positive for indigenous peoples. Speakers also referred to efforts of indigenous organizations in Russia to defend indigenous peoples' interests. The need for maintaining good relations with non-indigenous peoples was underlined by several speakers.

22. Indigenous participants from Russia expressed their appreciation to the United Nations for organizing the consultation. For several it was the first time they were participating at an international conference and they were eager to share in the experiences from other countries and from the United Nations system. They asked for assistance from the United Nations system in solving their problems.

III. LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES: EXISTING LAWS RELATING TO ACCESS, USE AND OWNERSHIP

23. The representative of ILO gave a brief overview of the international standards on land and natural resources in relation to indigenous peoples as provided for in ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Participants pointed out that land is one of the most fundamental concerns of indigenous peoples since they have a special spiritual relation to the land and they depend on it both for their material and for their cultural survival. They perceive themselves as an integral part of the environment. The building of institutions to regulate the relations of indigenous peoples to land and natural resources is often a complex issue since there is generally a tension between indigenous communities and the dominant society for the use of land and resources. Many participants stressed that it was very important, in the process of solving land-related problems, to preserve harmony among communities and to base solutions on mutual respect. The representative of the Russian Government appealed for the unity of the Russian Federation which, he said, is fundamental for the economic and social development of all the peoples living in the Federation.

24. A major problem identified as one which needs urgent action was the lack of national, comprehensive legislation for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. Certain laws and presidential decrees already existed but they were generally inadequate or poorly applied at the local level. In the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation only 8 of the 260 deputies were indigenous and their efforts to open discussions in the Parliament on indigenous peoples' rights had been blocked for some 3 years. The text of the law finally proposed had not been given follow-up. In the absence of unified national legislation, indigenous peoples had generally no say in decisions connected with the exploitation of land and natural resources. Unified national legislation should also be complemented by adequate implementation mechanisms, many participants stressed.

25. Local/regional administrations were often among those exploiting indigenous peoples along with private companies which operated anarchically due to the legal vacuum or the non-application of laws. Some local/regional administrations, however, had adopted legislation favourable to indigenous peoples. In the Yakut/Sakha region, for example, there were legal provisions guaranteeing the right to own land and natural resources, including hunting and fishing; the consent of tribes was needed for the use of land and resources; and many collective farms had been converted to community lands and returned to indigenous tribes. In the Nenetsky region, with the participation of indigenous people, legislation had been drafted giving legal status to areas inhabited by indigenous communities which lived traditionally, including nomadic communities.

26. The interventions of participants conveyed that there exists a variety of situations. While in certain areas traditional forms of land use have either disappeared or are threatened with extinction, in other areas they still exist, sometimes combined with non-traditional activities. In certain areas traditional forms of land use have been or are being revived.

27. The privatization process was a source of concern for indigenous participants. It was pointed out that foreign companies showed no concern, not only for the views and survival of the indigenous communities in the lands and waters of which they were operating, but also for the environmental sustainability of these areas. Thus massive timber harvesting, mining and fishing were conducted in ways and quantities which were destructive to the environment. Environmental damage detrimental to indigenous communities was also due to nuclear power plants and hydroelectric plants. In that regard participants stressed that there should be no construction of such plants in indigenous areas. Examples of environmental degradation were mentioned regarding the Khabarovsk, Kamchatka and Chukotka regions and participants asked for environmental recovery programmes with the assistance of the international community. An environmental study was proposed in respect to the Ugodan deposit in the Chita oblast.

28. Another problem identified by indigenous participants was the lack of fishery quotas for indigenous peoples in many regions. There was a need to turn to the federal authorities for solutions. Unfortunately, it was pointed out, funds obtained for indigenous peoples' needs often did not reach indigenous communities.

29. Participants underlined the usefulness of drawing from international experience in dealing with the land issue. In that regard, special interest focused on the example of Greenland and its legislation which provides for collective ownership of land based on the patterns of traditional land use and occupancy. The majority of the population in Greenland is indigenous and this provision applies equally to Danes and Greenlanders. Although the land is held collectively, it is possible to ask for permission to build a home or business. It was suggested, based on examples from Greenland, Canada and Alaska, that indigenous communities, together with their elders, record the traditional use of land and sea so as to help define the extent of traditionally used areas.

30. The representative of the Centre for Human Rights said that under the programme of advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights the Centre could, at the request of the Government, provide technical assistance in the areas of legislation-drafting, establishment of implementation mechanisms and training. The programme of advisory services could be "tailored" to respond to the specific needs of each country. Many important international human rights standards are already applicable for Russia and are relevant to indigenous peoples since Russia is already party to major human rights conventions. Advisory services are also made available by ILO. Referring to the need for legislation, the representative of UNDP mentioned the experience of an international advisory board which had been established on issues of accounting and said that such a board could perhaps provide a model for channelling advice on legislation for indigenous peoples.

IV. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT: PROBLEMS, INCLUDING HEALTH ISSUES, AND PERSPECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

31. Participants reiterated accounts of environmental degradation in the development process and its detrimental impact on indigenous communities. The result was not only unemployment but grave health problems. High cancer rates due to radiation and nuclear pollution by uranium mines and nuclear tests, death from accidents, alcoholism and suicides were especially highlighted. The child mortality rate of the people of the north was 23-fold the rate of other nationalities, according to one expert. Changes in dietary habits due to contact with the dominant society had created serious health deficiencies, including increase in the number of fat people. Particularly grave health problems were suffered by the people of Chukotka. In that region, efforts by the indigenous to restrict the sale of alcohol, which was exacerbating the situation, had not succeeded. Participants referred to efforts in several areas to face this health crisis and made several recommendations which are reflected in chapter VIII below.

32. The representatives of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference from Alaska and Greenland spoke about the grave problems of alcoholism among their communities and ways in which solutions were approached. The representative from Alaska referred to alcoholism as a spiritual disease coming from the problems faced by indigenous communities through their contacts with the mainstream society. In Alaska there was a successful sobriety movement, a campaign against alcohol, which included choosing leaders who are sober. The representative from Greenland said that all societies seemingly have to go through tremendous

hardship before getting used to alcohol. In Greenland alcohol was deregulated in 1953. Through the next decades accidents, violence, suicide, child abuse and other misconduct became common. Several strategies had been tried such as restricted opening hours for the sale of alcohol and rationing through a point system, but nothing except education and individual adjustment seemed to work. Today access to alcohol was unlimited, and a slow but very positive development was seen, especially among young people.

33. The representative of ILO referred to the international human rights standards which provide that indigenous people must enjoy health care without any discrimination. Indigenous peoples are indispensable for the preservation of the environment, he said. The representative of UNDP referred to the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) in development. She said that TNCs have the capital for development and can harm the environment. They are interested in dealing only with those who own the land, thus they deal most frequently with Governments and not with local communities. However, if local communities bear all the negative cost, companies know that their operation will not be viable in the long run and therefore sometimes try to improve their practices. Well-organized communities help raise the awareness of companies. The Vice-President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference spoke of ICC's policy in environmental matters.

34. The representative of the Arctic Society of Internal Medicine expressed his regret that the World Health Organization gave inadequate attention to the indigenous peoples of Siberia and asked that health programmes be instituted by WHO for the peoples of the North. There was also a great need for publications. He requested that his complaint and his requests be conveyed to WHO. He also said that UNICEF does not respond to the urgent needs of the indigenous children of the North and called for its attention.

V. PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE CULTURE AND LANGUAGES OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE ARCTIC AND SIBERIA

35. The preservation, revival and development of indigenous cultures and languages were underlined by participants as essential for the survival of indigenous peoples. Cultures and languages of the North have survived to different degrees. Participants referred to instances where indigenous languages have disappeared or are spoken by just a few old persons and to cases where, like in Sakha, the majority of the indigenous population speaks the language.

36. Problems identified with regard to culture and language were the lack of teachers and teaching facilities, lack of adequate publications in indigenous languages and publications on the history of indigenous peoples, lack of specialists in cultural matters, sending children to boarding schools where they lose contact with their parents and communities. A particular problem was the inaccuracy of official population statistics regarding indigenous peoples over the decades. Participants said their number was higher than that officially reported. Some speakers said that their own peoples had been deleted from official lists, as if they were extinct, while their communities were continuing their efforts for cultural survival. They appreciated being present at the meeting so that they could declare that they still exist. One participant said that his people was an ancient people with historic evidence

since the sixth century B.C., yet only 3,000 persons still remained, living in the midst of industrial and garbage areas, only 3 out of 12 persons having land, and having lost their language, without prospect for survival. Another participant said that some people were afraid to speak their language.

37. Efforts to maintain and develop indigenous cultures consisted of action at the national and local levels, participants pointed out. Activities included the development of alphabets for indigenous languages, production of films and TV programmes, performances of traditional music, dance and theatre, the creation of museums, the establishment of vocational schools in agriculture. Participants underlined the pressing need for funds so that such efforts can be enhanced and made a number of recommendations reflected in chapter VIII below.

VI. ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF PROJECTS AFFECTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

38. In their interventions, the representatives of the Centre for Human Rights, UNDP and ILO referred to the international standards providing that indigenous peoples should participate in decision-making and in particular in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects influencing their land and people. These standards are reflected in ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, but also in the United Nations General Assembly Plan of Action for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and the policy guidelines of UNDP and the World Bank.

39. During the discussions on land and development, participants stated that indigenous communities were very often not consulted in matters affecting them, including during the privatization process, with disastrous effects for their traditional lands, sea and livelihood. They underlined the need to establish by law procedures for consultation with indigenous peoples so that they could participate in decisions through their freely elected representatives. Several speakers stressed the urgent need for indigenous capacity-building in the management of natural resources. Management skills were badly needed.

40. It was stressed that indigenous peoples should strengthen their organizations at home and internationally. Unity was very important in this process. Lack of leaders was sometimes a problem and in that regard, participants urged that more consultations take place among indigenous peoples. Participation, it was pointed out, meant both negotiation and education of Governments and local authorities.

41. Speakers pointed out that indigenous peoples often lacked knowledge and information about international conventions and declarations and other developments at the national and international levels. Information was crucial in the process for meaningful participation. Recommendations were made for the establishment of an information centre on indigenous peoples.

42. Participants underlined the usefulness of international forums, such as the Arctic/Siberian Consultation, which provided opportunities for the exchange of information and experiences. They recommended that such consultations be organized by the United Nations on a regular basis. Participants also stressed the importance for indigenous peoples from different countries to consult among themselves at the international level. Participation at the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations was also recommended.

VII. INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE; PRIORITIES AND FOLLOW-UP

43. During the discussion of this item participants summarized previous recommendations on international standards and the availability of technical assistance by the United Nations system, in particular the Centre for Human Rights and ILO, in the drafting of unified legislation regarding indigenous peoples. The representative of ILO, Mr. Lee Swepston, announced the publication by the end of the year of a manual on access of indigenous peoples to technical cooperation which was being prepared by ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank.

44. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme, Ms. Lorraine Ruffing, said that she would report on the results of the Consultation to UNDP's Division on Environment and Natural Resources and to the Europe Division, and bring to their attention proposals for projects which had been put forward by participants. She said that the new philosophy which permeates the United Nations system regarding development is empowerment and effective governance. Empowerment depends on knowledge. She expressed the hope that the Consultation would be the beginning of a number of encounters.

45. The President of the Saami Council, Mr. Lars Anders Baer, underscored the crucial role of indigenous organizations in action programmes regarding indigenous communities. He referred to the importance of international conferences among the indigenous peoples of the world, including the indigenous leaders' summit organized last May by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Goodwill Ambassador for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, Ms. Rigoberta Menchú. A follow-up meeting would take place in October 1993 in Mexico. An Arctic leaders' summit would take place in Sweden in November 1993.

46. The Vice-President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Mr. Ingmar Egede, referred to the recent tragic killing of Brazilian Yanomami, including women and children, due to the influx of goldminers into their territory, and proposed that a message of solidarity be sent to the Yanomami people on behalf of the participants in the Consultation and that an appeal be sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take all necessary action for the protection of the Yanomami. The participants agreed with this proposal.

47. The representative of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Viacheslav Bankevich, said that the challenges of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People went far beyond 1993. The National Committee on the International Year established by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Shakhrai, was working to implement a programme on

indigenous issues which were often complex and difficult to resolve. He supported fully the proclamation of a decade of indigenous peoples which would give the opportunity to prepare a long-term programme with specific goals each year. Efficient policy coordination at the federal level was very important and adequate mechanisms for problem resolution had to be established. While indigenous cultural activities were significant, there had to be specific economic and social assistance for indigenous peoples and the federal Government had to coordinate it. Health had definitely emerged as a central priority during the discussions. Mr. Benkevich said he would report to President Yeltsin on the results of the Consultation.

48. The representative of the Centre for Human Rights, Ms. Elissavet Stamatopoulou, said that the Consultation was one of the most important activities of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and had been productive since indigenous representatives and other participants had identified the major problems facing the peoples of the North and had made specific suggestions for their solutions. The International Year was providing the opportunity for the United Nations system to focus on indigenous peoples at the operational level in the spirit of the "New Partnership" which was the theme of the Year. The United Nations had created an era where respect for human rights was the framework for the solution of problems. Upon returning to United Nations Headquarters, she would organize debriefing sessions with the relevant United Nations programmes and agencies and draw their attention to the results of the Consultation and to specific recommendations. On behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Coordinator of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, she expressed her deep appreciation to the Russian Government for its generous hospitality and to the indigenous representatives and other participants for having provided their valuable contribution to the Arctic/Siberian Consultation. She expressed the hope that the follow-up action would indeed prove the usefulness of this meeting.

49. The representative of ILO, Mr. Lee Swepston, thanked the Government of the Russian Federation for the efforts they had put into the organization of the Consultation, and to the positive reception by the representative of the President of its discussions and recommendations. It had been a source of great satisfaction to begin what promised to be a long and fruitful association between the international community and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and Siberian regions of the country. It was very important to ensure their survival and their ability to make a positive contribution to the development dialogue that affected them. It was equally necessary that all the parties to this vital development process ensure that it be carried out in a rational and orderly way, in conformity with national and international standards, and in the best interests of both the indigenous peoples and the other peoples of the Russian Federation.

50. The Co-Chairman, Mr. Vladimir Seriakov, in his concluding remarks pointed out that major points which had emerged during the discussions were the need for legislative guarantees, the need to protect land and the environment and the need to develop indigenous cultures and languages. He referred to many decrees adopted recently regarding the peoples of the North and to draft laws pending before the Parliament. He also underlined the special relations

between the Russian Federation and the other circumpolar countries in facing common problems. Respect for human rights, Mr. Seriakov said, is the yardstick by which peoples will be evaluated in the twenty-first century.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

51. Indigenous peoples have a special spiritual relationship to land that they traditionally occupy. Land is not only an economic resource, it is necessary for the cultural survival of the indigenous peoples.

52. Existing legislation affecting indigenous peoples is poorly applied and there is a lack of adequate mechanisms of implementation at all levels. There is a need for rapid action to prevent further losses of indigenous lands.

53. There is an urgent need for unified national legislation concerning indigenous peoples, which will serve, inter alia, to protect lands and related natural resources from economic exploitation by non-indigenous interests.

54. Positive measures have been taken by some local administrations in the last two years to recognize traditional land rights. Local administrations in other regions, however, are among those exploiting indigenous peoples.

55. Privatization is a major concern of indigenous peoples. Many companies have shown no regard for the environmentally sustainable development of indigenous lands. During the privatization process the best land is often taken by new business interests. The privatization of the traditional habitat of indigenous peoples should not be allowed. Unified national legislation is necessary to protect these lands.

56. There is a need to demarcate lands of traditional indigenous use.

57. In cooperation with their elders, the indigenous peoples should record the traditional use of lands, waterways and sea. This will help to define the extent of the lands and waters traditionally used. Certain large-scale economic activities for exploitation of natural resources, such as mining and industrial forestry, are particularly damaging to traditional indigenous livelihood.

58. There is great concern about environmental degradation of areas where indigenous peoples live, especially by nuclear contamination and over-exploitation of natural resources.

59. There should be no construction of hydroelectric plants in permafrost areas.

60. The United Nations system should be requested to conduct expert studies aiming at the environmental recovery of plundered indigenous lands.

61. Participants acknowledged the ongoing tension over land use between the indigenous and the non-indigenous peoples. They stressed the importance of preserving harmonious relations between these peoples, on the basis of mutual respect.

62. There should be no economic exploitation of the traditional lands of indigenous peoples without their prior informed consent given by their freely elected representatives. If such consent is given, there should be an equitable sharing of the benefits from the economic exploitation of the traditional lands of indigenous peoples.

63. Several participants stressed the need for technical assistance from the United Nations system for the formulation of legislation and advice on implementation mechanisms. The representatives of the United Nations system present at the Consultation stated that such assistance could be made available.

64. Participants stressed the importance of international meetings, such as the Arctic/Siberian Consultation, so that useful experiences from different countries can be shared. It was proposed that such meetings take place on a regular basis.

65. Indigenous peoples should participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all development projects affecting them. This should be guaranteed by legislation. There is a need for establishing procedures for consultation with indigenous peoples concerning in particular, development projects in the region.

66. Participants urged that all Arctic countries ratify ILO Convention No. 169. Its ratification will guarantee the realization of the human rights of the indigenous peoples of those countries.

67. Indigenous peoples should continue to strengthen their organizations for the protection and promotion of their interests in the spirit of the ILO Convention No. 169 and the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

68. Indigenous peoples need access to information at all levels. This includes information on legislation and other matters inside the country and on developments in other countries and in international organizations.

69. It was recommended that a national information centre on indigenous issues be established.

70. It is important for indigenous peoples to take an active part in local, regional and national levels of government and administration in the areas where they live. Training in management skills is badly needed.

71. Indigenous peoples often face grave health problems. These arise from a variety of causes:

(a) Alcoholism, which is both a cause and a symptom;

(b) Uncontrolled availability of alcohol;

(c) Environmental degradation because of unwise exploitation of their regions, and nuclear and other contamination;

(d) Lack of access to health care;

(e) Changing dietary habits.

These problems include, in addition to alcoholism itself, alcohol-related accidents and injuries, high rates of cancer and respiratory diseases, high infant mortality, low life expectancy and suicides.

72. Regarding health issues the following recommendations were made:

(a) Reform of the public health system;

(b) Funding of medical research;

(c) Training of general practitioners, paramedical personnel and primary health care providers;

(d) Health education for the public including media campaigns;

(e) Taking account of traditional health care methods.

73. An international study should be conducted on issues related to nutritional changes among indigenous peoples.

74. Several speakers stated that official estimates of indigenous peoples and the size of their populations were considerably lower than the real figures.

75. The maintenance, revival and development of indigenous languages are indispensable for the survival of indigenous cultures. Action on this matter is needed urgently. Many languages have already disappeared and others are on the verge of extinction.

76. There is a need to adopt a legal framework for the protection of indigenous languages.

77. Concern was expressed over the fact that many indigenous children who were sent to boarding schools lose contact with their families. communities and cultures.

78. Several speakers pointed to the need for access to higher education for indigenous youth, so that they can return to their communities with skills which are now not available to them.

79. There is an urgent need for vocational training for unemployed indigenous people and for training in how to operate cooperative farms and other undertakings.

80. The lack of indigenous teachers, teaching materials and financial support is a severe problem for indigenous communities.

81. There is a need for contact with other cultures. In this connection indigenous young people need to learn other languages in order to facilitate their contacts with other cultures.

82. Support was expressed for the proposal that the United Nations proclaim a decade of action for indigenous peoples. Support was also expressed for the recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights regarding indigenous peoples, as well as for the renewal of the mandate of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

83. It was proposed that an international database be created, with the help of the United Nations system, to facilitate exchange of information among indigenous peoples.

84. Revival of now extinct indigenous languages is extremely complex. There is an urgent need for the United Nations system to convene a conference on revival of indigenous languages, drawing on the many different experiences in this field, based on information provided by indigenous educators and specialists appointed by indigenous peoples.

85. It was proposed that relevant United Nations agencies organize in 1994 a seminar on the preservation of culture and on ecology protection in Kamchatka.

86. It was suggested that an international study be conducted on the socio-economic and environmental effects of mining in the Arctic and Siberian regions on indigenous peoples.

87. Participants called for an international ban on nuclear tests.

88. UNDP, the World Bank, UNESCO and UNEP were called upon to consider providing assistance for projects relevant to their mandates contained in the conclusions and recommendations.

89. WHO was called upon to pay more attention to the health problems of indigenous peoples of the North, in particular problems connected with nuclear radiation.

90. UNICEF was urged to support programmes regarding the health of children in the North.

91. Participants recognized the positive role of the Centre for Human Rights, ILO and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

92. The priorities for action identified by the Consultation are (a) the need for unified national legislation providing guarantees for indigenous peoples; (b) need for protection of land and sea of traditional indigenous use, including environmental protection; (c) need for protection of health, culture and languages.